

TO: Barbara Moffett

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Interview with Mr. Henry LeBlanc, Texas State Employment Service. He is the head of Farm Placement Work.

Mr. LeBlanc said Latin Americans did not like to "pick" cotton even when the pay was equal to "pulling" cotton (boll and stalk). They will only "pick" it when there are no jobs elsewhere, as in the start of the season in Rio Grande Valley. Then they will even accept the low wage of \$2.05 per hundred pounds. When "pulling" begins along the Gulf Coast about one-fourth way through the season all the workers leave the valley. Cotton farther north around Bryan is all "picked" and it is almost impossible to get crews to sign to pick even at \$2.50 per hundred pounds (equal he said to \$1.55 for pulling). Of 1800 workers available only 60 agreed to pick last year. The State Employment Service made the farmers wait for a week or more until they interviewed crew leaders around Corpus or in the Valley to try to get them to pick. When they all refused, they then authorized each farmer to contract for braceros in Mexican reception center. (He said farmers preferred local labor.) They have to transport and house the bracero and also pay \$7.50 per person just to start.

The bracero must be paid "prevailing wage" (the wage paid to 66% of those employed in this type of agriculture). This is determined every two weeks during the season by the Dallas Bureau of Employment Security who send telegrams all over Texas stating the wage for each area on the basis of field reports sent in the preceding week. Crew leaders and workers are both asked what wage they receive (the worker often gives \$.10 to \$.25 per hundred pounds to the crew leader as a fee for transportation.)

There is no hearing in February and March to determine the prevailing wage or to certify need of braceros, as was done during the war and as I understood is still done in New Mexico.

There is a hearing by a board to estimate the need of braceros for the total year, held long ahead, but this is only an estimate. Priests are on these boards.

Last year 82,000 braceros came into Texas during July -- 4,000 is the maximum that could be contracted in the Mexican center in any one day. About nine days before the end of the month all crew leaders had left the valley to go to Corpus Christi and 39,000 braceros had left for Mexico so they could be recontracted for farms in Arkansas, where the contract was longer. Then a new lot of braceros had to be contracted for the valley.

He said a good man can pick 400-500 pounds a day, a woman 300-350. A good man can pull 600, woman 400. (These figures seem high to me.) Average of all local pickers including children who pick 90 pounds, is 200 pounds a day for a 5 day week, or 1000 pounds a week. Braceros pick average of 160 pounds a day but work 6 days. Both earn average of \$20.00 a week, the average including children.

He said it was almost impossible to get farm laborers to live permanently on the farm. Iowa farms offer \$250 a month. A Lampasas general farm hand would get \$175 a month. In the Rio Grande Valley farmers pay \$.50 an hour plus house and garden ~~xxx~~ ~~xxx~~ plot for settled farm labor.

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TSFS is conducting a survey of 2,000 Texas workers to find what they do in the winter. I will apply for this later.

He thinks crew leaders will not know how to make out social security forms. Many cannot read or write. Many speak Spanish but few read Spanish so instructions should not be printed in Spanish. Simple instructions are being printed in English for crew leaders. Spring Meetings are held in Texas of all crew leaders, to acquaint them with all regulations, including the new Social Security regulations.

Lists of crew leaders are not given to the public. There are 3,000 crew leaders in Texas, I think he said. He would not give me a list.

Hearings are held in Idaho and Michigan to set prevailing wages early in the spring. No workers are present at these ~~meetings~~ hearings.

He was very bitter about Galarza's book, which he claims is based on figures of seven years ago. He showed me a letter stating that the Los Angeles ad mentioned was of 1949 and that the figures of bracero wage earnings on page 30 was actually for Sunday earnings only. One other error mentioned I had noted myself. The bracero is only given \$1.50 a day for subsistence if there is no available work for him, not otherwise.